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OO RUEHBZ RUEH DU RUEHGI RUEHJO RUEHMR RUEHRN
DE RUEH KI #0128/01 0401240
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 091240Z FEB 09
FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9158
INFO RUEHXR/RWANDA COLLECTIVE
RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 000128

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [PHUM](#) [PREF](#) [KPKO](#) [CG](#)
SUBJECT: EASTERN DRC NOTES - FEBRUARY 9

REF: KINSHASA 116

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¶1. (U) The items contained in this report consist principally of spot information from various sources. This report is not exhaustive, nor can all the information contained therein be confirmed at this time.

Pareco Opts for Political Path

¶2. (SBU) Apparently following the lead of the CNDP (reftel), Pareco has announced that it too will transform from an armed movement into a political party. Pareco's national president, Sengugu Museveni, announced on February 6 that all Pareco elements would be placed under the command of the FARDC.

Tambwe: Still Seeking Nkunda's Extradition

¶3. (SBU) DRC Foreign Minister Alexis Tambwe Mwamba, speaking to press following the February 6 "4 by 4" meeting with GoR officials in Gisenyi, said that the DRC would pursue the extradition of former CNDP rebel leader Laurent Nkunda. Tambwe noted that the GDRC wanted to ensure adequate security for Nkunda's return.

National Assembly Petition for Special Session

¶4. (SBU) As of February 6, 260 DRC deputies had signed a petition demanding an extraordinary session of the National Assembly to discuss the presence of Rwandan troops on DRC soil. Although only 251 signatures are required for the petition to move forward, the decision whether to convoke an extraordinary session rests solely with the President of the National Assembly, Vital Kamerhe.

¶5. (SBU) A source "close to Kamerhe" told Radio Okapi that Kamerhe would welcome such a session. However, various media pointed out that many powerful figures within the government coalition have allegedly been highly critical of Kamerhe's lack of full support for the RDF/FARDC operations. Other observers noted that, even if Kamerhe does not convoke an extraordinary session, parliament will certainly take up this topic during its regular session in March.

Integration Process

¶6. (SBU) One week into the integration process, MONUC reported that 223 child soldiers (207 Mai Mai/Pareco and 16 CNDP) have been demobilized by MONUC's Child Protection Division. MONUC praised DRC authorities and the rebel groups for their cooperation. Nevertheless, according to UNICEF, there are still as many as 1,500 child soldiers in North Kivu.

Security Situation

¶17. (SBU) Radio Okapi reported that FDLR elements looted approximately 20 houses in the village of Kirumba, 180 kilometers north of Goma, on February 6. The FARDC/RDF joint operations have not yet reached this area.

Humanitarian Situation

¶18. (SBU) USAID/OFDA implementing partner IMC reported that the entire population of Chambucha (5,000) in North Kivu, situated on the South Kivu border, had fled due to significant FDLR presence in the area.

¶19. (SBU) In a recently released report, OCHA estimated that there are around 810,000 IDP's in North Kivu, including 230,000 in Masisi Territory, 220,000 in Lubero Territory, and 175,000 in Rutshuru Territory. At the Kibati IDP camp just north of Goma, 75,000 IDP's have left for their homes, leaving approximately 110,000. A February 6 USAID/DART visit to Kibati confirmed a noticeable decrease in the camp's population.

¶110. (SBU) John Holmes, UN Under-Secretary for Humanitarian Affairs, during a February 8 visit to the Kibati camp, called on local authorities to encourage IDP's to return home, if the security situation permits. According to Radio Okapi, some local officials maintain that residents continue to fear for their safety.

¶111. (SBU) Despite the end of FARDC-CNDP hostilities, OHCA and Refugees International noted that there have been limited IDP returns to areas formerly administered by the CNDP in Rutshuru

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Territory. Some have speculated that there are still concerns about CNDP intimidation of returning GDRC local administrators. However, reports vary as to the pace and number of returnees over recent days. For example, OCHA acknowledged that there had been significant IDP returns to Kibumba in Rutshuru Territory.

LRA: Operation Lightning Thunder

¶112. (SBU) Responding to recent criticism from Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF), SRSR Alan Doss maintained, in a February 6 letter to the organization, that MSF had "seriously misrepresented MONUC responsibilities and actions to protect civilians" in Haut Ulele. Doss claimed that, although MONUC had not been involved in the planning of the joint operation, it was providing logistical support to the FARDC. Doss cautioned that, because of the enormous area involved and MONUC's limited presence, MONUC did not have the capacity to respond to every emergency at every moment.

¶113. (SBU) MONUC reported that, as of February 5, the FARDC had deployed six battalions to Dungu Territory. The FARDC forces are positioned along the four major road axes in Dungu.

GARVELINK